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# **Environmental Assessment**

# for the

# Smullin Visitor Center Complex



Proposed Visitor Center Model

U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Land Management Medford District Grants Pass Resource Area

# UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT MEDFORD DISTRICT

# **EA COVER SHEET**

RESOURCE AREA: Grants Pass		FY & REPORT # EA Number OR-110-99-04	
ACTION/TITLE: Rand Vis LOCATION: Rand	itor Complex		
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### **NOTICE**

"Unless otherwise requested, comments, including names and street addresses of commentors, will be available for public review. Individual respondents may request confidentiality. If you wish to withhold your name or street address from public review or from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your written comment. Such requests will be honored to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, will be made available for public inspection in their entirety."

### GTANTS PASS RESOURCE AREA

# SMULLIN VISITOR CENTER

### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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# Chapter 1 Purpose and Need for Action and Alternatives

### A. Introduction and Need for the Proposal

### 1. Introduction

The purpose of this environmental assessment (EA) is to assist in the decision-making process by assessing the environmental and human effects resulting from implementing the proposed project and/or alternatives. The EA will also helps in determining if an environmental impact statement (EIS) needs to be prepared or if a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

This Proposal is consistent with the objectives of: (1) the Final EIS and Record of Decision (ROD) dated June 1995 for the Medford District Resource Management Plan dated October 1994 (p.6 & 63); and (2) the Final Supplemental EIS on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated February 1994; and (3) the Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl and its Attachment A entitled the Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl dated April 13, 1994; and. (4) the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River revised development and management plan, dated July 7, 1972; and (5) the Rogue National Wild and Scenic River Activity Plan for the Hellgate Recreation Section dated November 9, 1978. and (6) Management Guidelines and Standards for National Wild and Scenic Rivers. (USDI, 1989). The EA is tiered to the above mentioned EISs.

### 2. Need for the Proposal

This proposal will increase the effectiveness of the management of the Wild and Scenic Rogue River by upgrading, replacing and adding facilities to the Rand Administrative Complex.

The current visitor center has extremely limited space and is devoted solely to the administration of the Wild Section permit system. The new facility will serve all administrative functions of the entire river Wild and Recreational sections. Currently the staff of the River Program is split between the existing Visitor center, a former residence being used for offices and offices located in Medford. The new facility will put all of the staff under one roof. The new facility will also provide the staff with the up to date communication and computer infrastructure needed to efficiently serve the public's information needs.

The new facility will provide ample space for interpretive exhibits, interactive information displays and other river related information. The new Visitors Center will provide the Wild Section permit staff with the resources needed to give information to the users concerning regulations and requirements. It will also provide an area suitable for equipment inspections and adequate parking of vehicles and raft trailers.

The completion of the River Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the Recreation Section of the Rogue, will place additional responsibilities on the BLM for the management of this section of the Rogue. The new Visitor Center will serve as the central point for this administration for the entire river.

A new short stay campground will provide a convenient camping location for persons waiting for permit openings as well as those preparing for and returning from Wild Section trips.

An enclosed equipment storage/shop will provide protection from the weather for expensive equipment.

### **B.** Scoping Issues Relevant to the Proposal

### 1. Traffic

The only issue identified during the public scoping process was a concern that this proposal might have the potential to increase traffic on the Merlin-Galice road.

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### C. Proposed Action and/or Alternatives

### 1. <u>Proposed Action</u>

The Bureau of Land Management, Medford District is proposing the construction of a four thousand square foot visitor center-administrative building and other facilities. (Appendix C)

This new structure will replace and expand the role of the existing visitor center located at the Rand compound, 14335 Merlin-Galice Road. The new structure is proposed to be located near the Rand boat ramp and will contain the following components: Wild Section permit office, river information desk, interpretative display areas, staff offices, public rest rooms, 30 seat video theater, conference room. Other facilities would include: Secured overnight parking area for the public, a 10 unit limited stay campground for river users, campground host facilities and an equipment storage building. The water, septic and road systems will be improved to service the new facilities.

The existing Rand compound, originally a Forest Service Ranger Station, will remain intact. It has been nominated to the Department of the Interior's register of historic places and will be maintained accordingly. It will continue to serve as a base for operational maintenance on the Recreational and Wild sections of the river.

### 2. <u>Alternatives to the Proposed Action</u>

The planning process focused on the location and design of the campground and Visitor Center. There was one significant design alternative for the campground and one for the visitor centershop.

Campground alternative (Appendix A)

Appendix A shows alternative design for the campground. This alternative consist of a 10 unit campground with one road instead of two.

Visitor center Shop alternative (Appendix B)

Appendix B shows alternative location for the Visitor Center and Shop building. Except for the location of the structures and the design of the Visitor center and campground all other features of the preferred alternative would apply to the design alternatives. This would include the boat storage lot, water system improvements, and road improvements shown in appendix C.

### 3. No Action Alternative

The no action alternative would be to not build the complex and continue to use the existing Rand complex.

# Chapter 2 Environmental Consequences

#### A. Introduction

Only substantive site-specific environmental changes that would result from implementing the proposed action or alternatives are discussed in this chapter. If an ecological component is not discussed, it should be assumed that the resource specialists have considered affects to that component and found the proposed action or alternatives would have minimal or no affects.

Similarly, unless addressed specifically, the following were found not to be affected by the proposed action or alternatives: air quality; areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC); cultural or historical resources; Native American religious sites; prime or unique farmlands; floodplains; endangered, threatened or sensitive plant, animal or fish species; water quality; wetlands/riparian zones; wild and scenic rivers; and wilderness areas.

# **B.** Site Specific and Cumulative Beneficial or Adverse effects of the Proposed Action and design alternatives.

1. Effects common to all of the build alternatives

The following apply to the proposed action and the two design alternatives.

### a. Fisheries/Riparian

The proposed action does not hinder the attainment of the Aquatic Conservation Strategy Objectives of the Northwest Forest Plan. North Star Gulch is a ditched Class 4 seasonal stream which percolates into the sand before reaching the river. As a Class 1 river (anadromous fish use), the Rogue has a riparian reserve width equal to two site potential trees heights, which is approximately 300 feet. This width is greater than that of the 100-year flood plain. As a Class 4 stream (no fish use), North Star Gulch ditch has a riparian reserve width of one site potential tree height, which is approximately 150 feet. This width is greater than that of the 100-year flood plain as well. No new development is proposed within either of the riparian reserves, therefore there are no fisheries issues associated with this proposed action.

#### b. Wildlife

In general, the proposed action will result in two types of impacts: direct and indirect. Direct impacts include forested acres converted to non-forested habitat as a result of the proposed expansion. The proposed action will directly impact less than one acre of forested habitat. The majority of the construction will occur on sites already disturbed through previous developments. Indirect impacts include the disturbance created during construction. The proposed action will result in indirect impacts to areas immediately adjacent to the project site.

### Threatened and Endangered Species

The proposed action is not anticipated to impact bald eagle habitat. Although expansion of the visitor center may eliminate several trees potentially suitable for perching, the value of these trees as perches is already greatly reduced by their proximity to the existing facilities. Because the project area is on the west side of the river and foraging is primarily associated down river and on the east side, impacts to foraging habitat would be minimal. The determination is that the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the bald eagle.

No marbled murrelets or suitable marbled murrelet habitat occurs within the project area. The proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the marbled murrelet.

Although peregrine falcons are a wide ranging species, the current levels of human use at the existing Rand administrative site already reduces the probability that the proposed project area would be heavily used as foraging habitat. The disturbance created during construction might disrupt use patterns of any peregrine falcons foraging in the immediate vicinity of the project area. This displacement would be temporary and represent only the area immediately adjacent to the construction. As a result, for the duration of the construction, foraging birds might avoid the immediate vicinity of the project and forage in other areas where there is less disturbance. Suitable foraging habitat is not considered a limiting factor for the Slim's Grave peregrine falcon. Therefore, the proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the peregrine falcon.

No known existing spotted owls would be impacted by the disturbance associated with construction or the conversion of less than one acre of forested woodlands. The proposed action is not likely to adversely affect the spotted owl.

### Survey and Manage Species

For the fringed myotis, long-eared myotis, long-legged myotis, pallid bat, and silver haired bat, the proposed project may result in the loss of less than one acre of potential foraging and roosting habitat. None of the roosting sites potentially affected by the project would represent large colonial roosts. As a result, potential loss of suitable roosts are more likely to affect individuals

rather than large groups. This minimizes potential impacts. Any individuals utilizing the project area may be displaced during the construction.

For the Del Norte salamander and red tree vole, no suitable habitat was detected in the project area. Based on this, no impacts are anticipated.

For the survey and manage molluscs potentially occurring in the project area, the proposed action will remove less than one acre of potentially suitable habitat.

#### c. Cultural Resources.

There were no American Indian artifacts or features found during the survey, and whatever may have been there may be gone. However, most of the terraces along the river were occupied, and often have deep cultural deposits. So there is a possibility that Rand may also have buried materials. Consequently archaeological monitoring will take place during the construction phase.

### d. Botany

Visitor Center/shop - The area proposed for the visitor center is located on a forested terrace just above the riparian zone of the Rogue River. Part of the area is currently a parking lot and part of the area is on a slope between the parking lot and the loop road down to the boat launch. The visitor center and its parking lot will extend into the surrounding forest, but most of it will be on disturbed ground. The entire area is a mixture of native and non-native shrub and herbaceous species with an overstory of ponderosa pine and Douglas-fir. The dominant shrubs are hazel and various blackberry species (including the non-native, Himalayan blackberry).

One population of the Bureau Watch species, *Smilax californica*, was found in the swale south of the current parking area. This species is a unique lily that is a creeping vine occasionally found along the Rogue and Illinois rivers. It is more common in California.

Campground - The area proposed for the campground is in an oak woodland with primarily nonnative species in the herbaceous layer (including domestic Iris and garden shrubs). Some midseral ponderosa pines and incense cedar are growing on the edges of the woodland. White oak (*Quercus garryana*) provides substrate for a higher diversity of non-vascular species (lichens and bryophytes), than the surrounding conifer species.

No Special Status species were found, but the Survey and Manage Component 4 lichen, *Pseudocyphellaria anthraspis*, was found on the white oaks. Although management of this species is not required, the number of fruiting bodies found on one specimen was unique.

Waterline - The water line route begins in a grassy opening with primarily non-native species. It then proceeds mostly along an old road with a mixture of native and non-native vegetation growing.

Two populations of the Bureau Sensitive vascular species, *Sophora leachiana*, were found at the water tank at the end of the water line flagging. The species is quite a rare endemic that can only be found in a narrow range. The area around Rand and Mt. Peavine is its main population center. The species will spread into disturbed areas as long as its original population is not heavily disturbed.

Non-native species - In all three locations, the predominance of non-native species in the shrub and herbaceous layer must be taken into account when ground disturbing actions begin. Several species including cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*), Himalayan blackberry (*Rubus discolor*), dogtail grass (*Cynosurus echinatus*) and bull thistle (*Circium vulgare*) were found and will aggressively spread to out compete native vegetation when the ground is disturbed.

The proposed action and its alternative building locations should not effect botanical resources as long as the following mitigating measures are instituted.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #1 - The *Smilax californica* population, even though just a Bureau Watch species, should be protected from the falling of two trees in its vicinity by a small buffer. This buffer would allow for the falling of these trees away from the population.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #2 - The area of the two *Sophora leachiana* populations adjacent to the water tank should not be disturbed. A small protection buffer outlining the population boundaries should prevent this.

Proposed Mitigating Measure #3 - The white oak with the *Pseudocyphallaria anthraspis* fruiting body population should remain standing, if possible. It could be flagged accordingly.

Mitigating Measure #4 - The use of sterile wheatgrass and native grass seed (such as *Elymus glaucus*) should be used for the erosion control seed mixture. Straw bales should also be of native grass origin. The seed mixture and bales should be available at the USFS Stone Nursery. This action will help to prevent the spread of non-natives into highly disturbed construction areas.

#### e. Soils

The design of the preferred alternative has maximized use of existing paved surface which has a 100 percent storm runoff surface. All 100 percent runoff surfaces except campground roads and pull outs will be drained into a dry well or a rocked energy dissipater located in a swale. A complete erosion control plan is part of the project process. There would be an added septic

system including a drain field. This system would utilize the soil as a treatment medium for primary treated septic effluent. The septic system would be subject to approval by DEQ.

#### f. Increased traffic

It is not anticipated that this project will increase traffic on the Merlin-Galice road above existing levels. The new facilities are directed at serving the current users better. However the traffic will be monitored if traffic increases. Additional signing or other transportation modifications will be discussed with the county highway department and adopted as necessary to meet county road safety standards.

### g. Social/Recreational/Visitor Services

The beneficial affects of the proposed action include a greater availability of River Program staff to the local communities and public that they serve. The building will increase the effectiveness of the permit office and enable them to educate users on the basics of river safety, leave no trace camping, fire regulations, and human waste disposal requirements.

The Visitor Center will provide a venue for the interpretation of the natural and social history of the area.

### 2. Effects of the No Action Alternative

The adverse effects would be the loss of the beneficial impacts of the proposed action.

We would be unable to realize the objectives as outlined in the proposed action which include:

- a. Consolidation of River Program staff.
- b. Interpretation of the cultural and natural environment
- c. River user education and equipment inspection
- d. Equipment storage
- e. Short stay camping facility

# Chapter 3 Agencies and Persons Consulted

### A. Coordination with other agencies/entities.

State of Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission

Josephine County Planning Department

### **B.** Public Involvement

Scoping letter. February 4, 1999

Legal notice Grants Pass Courier February 5, 1999

Legal notice Medford Mail Tribune. February 5, 1999

News release February 8, 1999

**Internet Site** 

http://www.or.blm.gov/Rogueriver/newsrelease3.htm February 8, 1999

**Public Meetings** 

Galice Community meeting March 24, 1999

Josephine County commisioners June 8, 1999

# SUMMARY OF COMMENTS 1999 PROPOSAL RECEIVED DURING PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

comment/concern number

Traffic 2

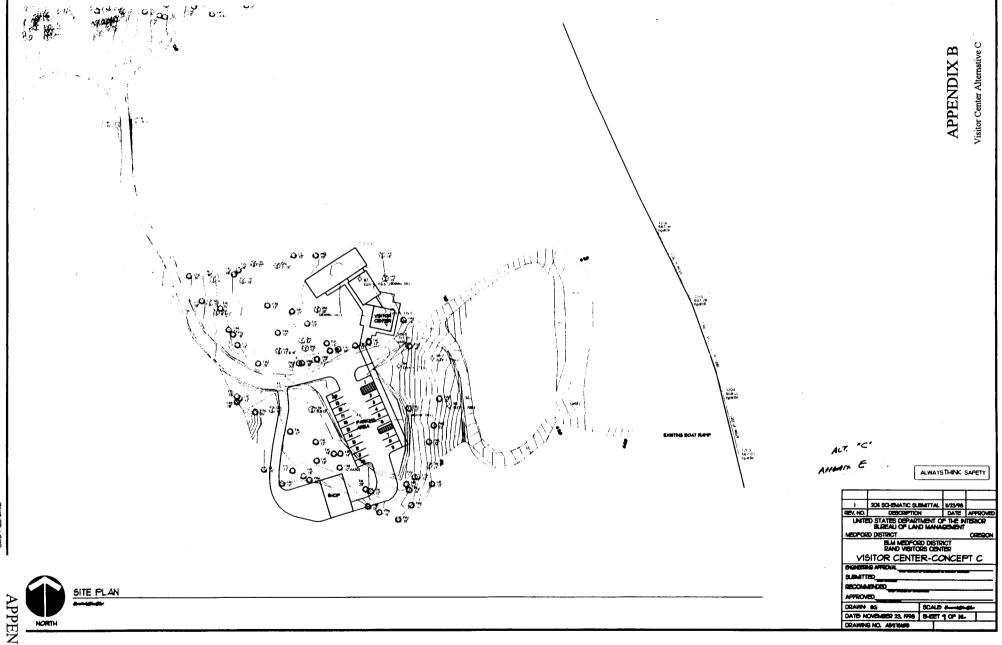
# **B.** Availability of Document and Comment Procedures

Copies of the completed EA document will be available in the BLM Medford District Office.

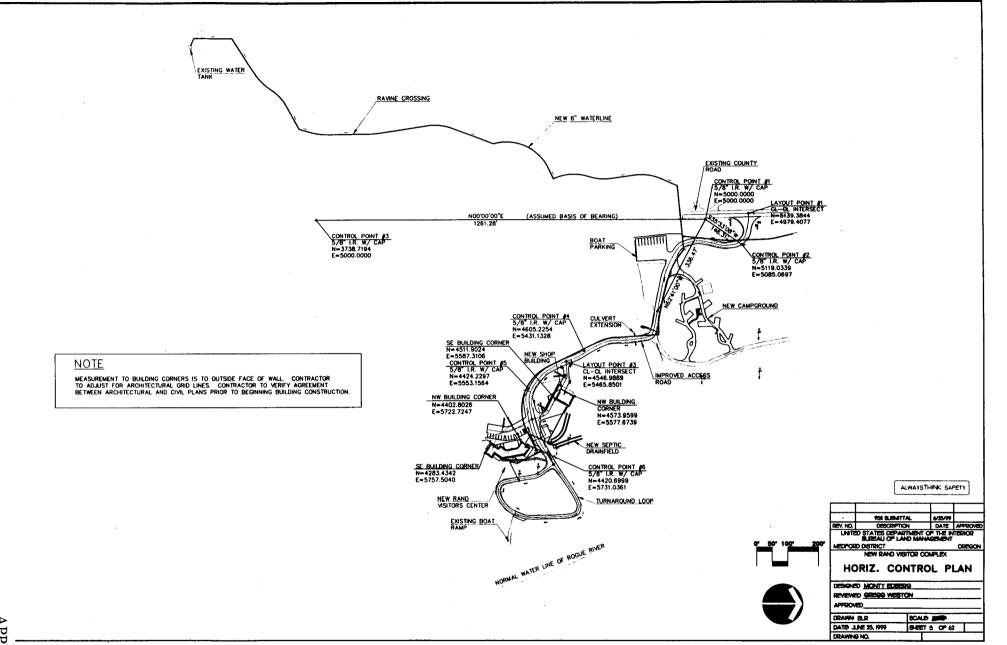
A public scoping and period was held from February 4, 1999 to open , 2 comments were received.

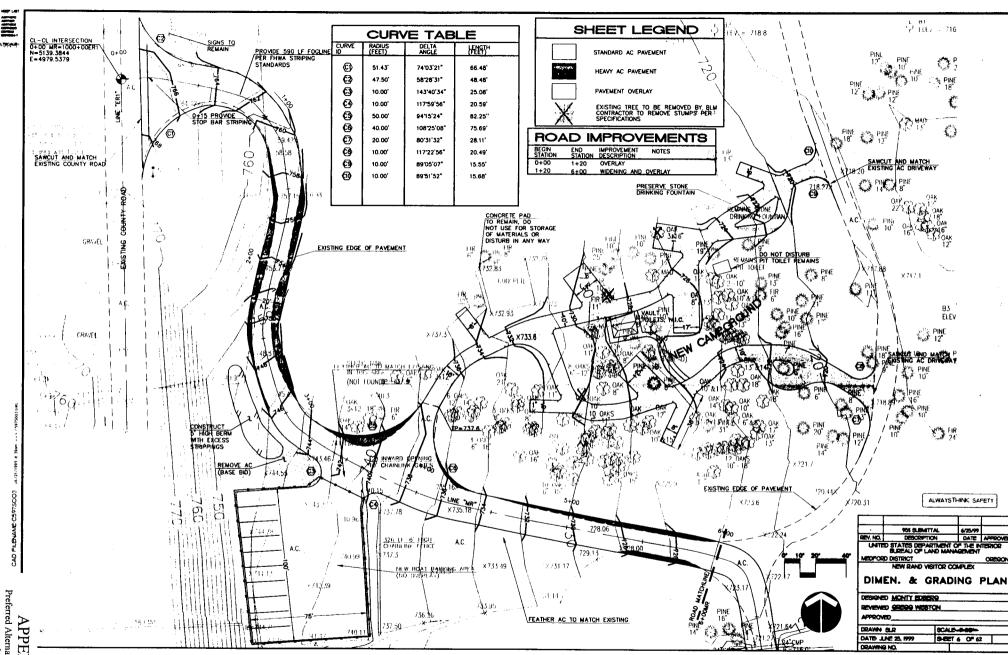
CAMPGROUND ALTERNATIVE APPENDIX A

CAMPGROUND ALTERNATIVE

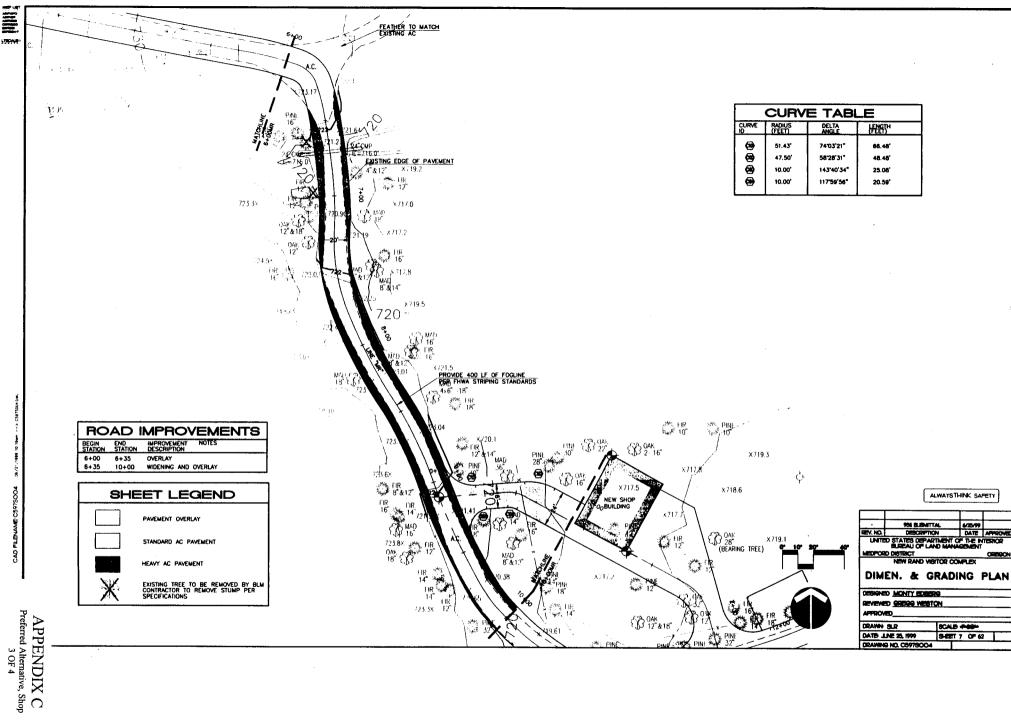


Visitor Center Alternative C

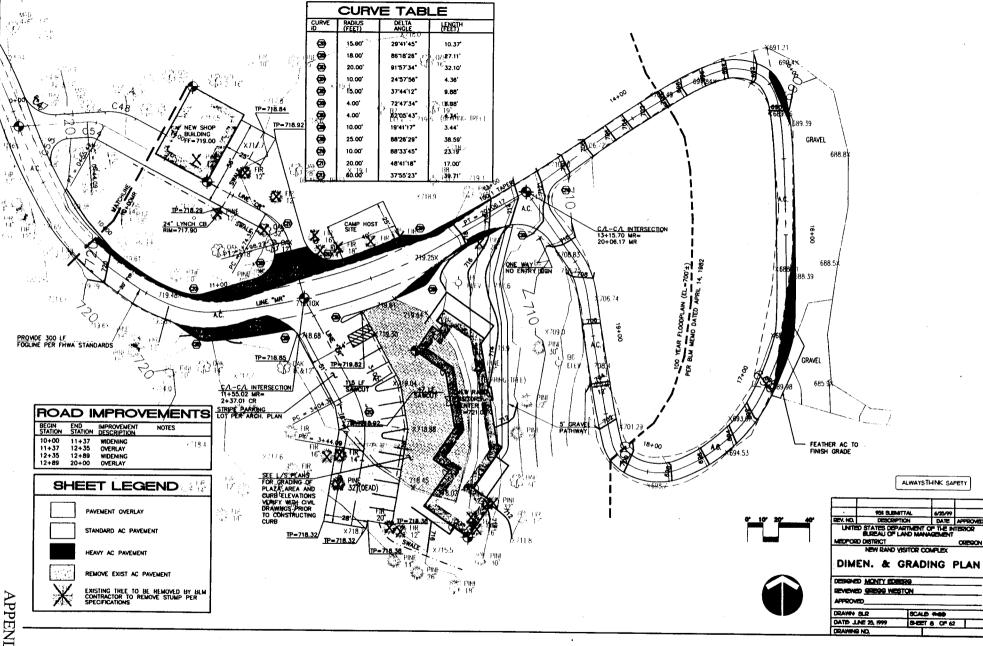




APPENDIX C
Preferred Alternative, Campground
2 OF 4



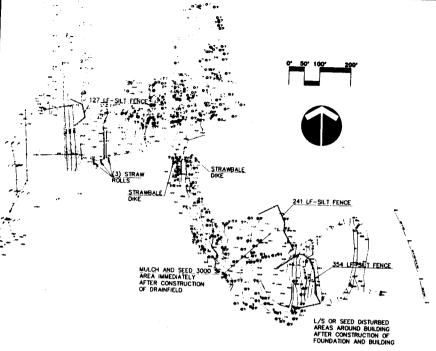


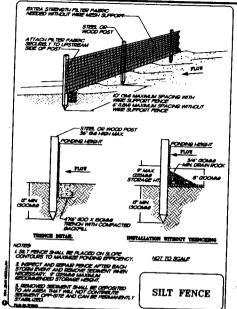


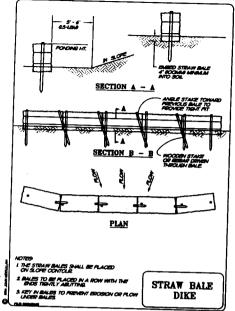
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APPENDIX C
Preferred Alternative, Visitor Center
4 OF 4









### **EROSION CONTROL NOTES**

1. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE PLANS AND THE CONSTRUCTION, REPLACEMENT, AND UPGRADING OF THESE FACILITIES IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CONTRACTOR UNTIL ALL CONSTRUCTION IS COMPLETED AND APPROVED AND NEW WESTATION/LANDSCAPING IS ESTABLISHED.

2. THE FACILITIES SHOWN ON THESE PLANS MUST CONSTRUCTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL CLEARING AND GRADING ACTIVITIES, AND IN SUCH A MANNER OF CONSTRUCTION IN CONJUNCTION WHATEN DOES NOT MOLATE APPLICABLE EPPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT LOUGHLISHED THAT SEDIMENT LADER WATER DOES NOT MOLATE APPLICABLE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT LOUGHLISHED TO RANDICIPATED SITE CONDITIONS.

3. THE FACILITIES SHOWN ON THIS PLAN MEE THE MINHAID GUALITY STANDARDS.

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5. VISIBLE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD, THESE FACILITIES SHALL BE UPGRADED AS NEEDED FOR UNEXPECTED EXTREME RANNFALL EVENTS AND TO ENSURE THAT SEDIMENT WENT WATER DOES NOT LEVE HE SITE.

5. VISIBLE DISCHARCE OF SEDIMENT TO THE ROGE RIVER WENT WENT WATER CONSTRUCTION FOR FORCE IS TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO PREVENT SEDIMENT RELEASE. NOTRY THE ALLOWED. THE CONTRACTOR IS TO TAKE IMMEDIATELY IF ADDITIONAL EMERGENCY PROSON CONTROL MEASURES ARE EXCENSIVELY OF DOTHORAL EMERGENCY PROSON CONTROL MEASURES ARE EXCENSIVELY WET OR OTHERWISE UNTILLABLE.

5. ASLEDING SHALL NOT BE DONE DURING WINDY WEATHER OR WHEN THE GROUND IS FROZEN, EXCESSIVELY WET OR OTHERWISE UNTILLABLE.

6. GRASS SHALL BE SEEDED AT A RATE OF NOT LESS THAN 100 POUNDS PER ACRE. SEED MIX SHALL INCLUDE: DWARF PERENNAL RYC GRASS (BOX BY WEIGHT)

9. THE CAREERING RED FESCULE (20X BY WEIGHT)

9. THE CAREERING RED FESCULE (20X BY WEIGHT)

5. ASSEDIES SHALL NOT FOR SEEDING MILL BE OFTERWINED BY ACTUAL WEATHER CONDITIONS. THE NORMAL SATISFACTIORY SEASON FOR SEEDING SHALL BE SECONED STHEMSE AUTHORIZED BY THE CONSTRUCTED BY THE CONSTRUCTED BY THE CONSTRUCTED BY THE SEED.

C.O.

SEDING SHALL OCCUR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AFTER GRADING OCCURS ON THE SITE. ONCE THE SEED

MAS BEEN APPLIED TO BARE TOP SOIL A 2" MULCH LAYER SHALL BE APPLIED.

STRAW BALES SHALL BE PLACED AT THE TOE OF ALL MAJOR FILL SLOPES WHEN NECESSARY, TO PREVENT

SLY FROM WASHING INTO EXISTING ORANIAGE WAYS.

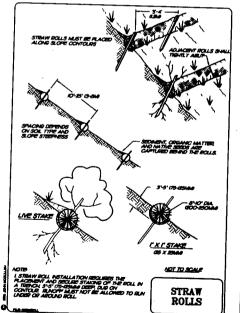
SEDIMENT FENCES SHALL BE REMOVED AFTER THEY HAVE SERVED THEIR USEFUL LIFE, BUT NOT BEFORE

THE UPSLOPE AREA HAS BEEN PERMANENTLY STABBILIZED.

SEDIMENT FENCES SHALL BE INSPECTED BY THE CONTRACTOR IMMEDIATELY AFTER EACH RAINFALL AND

AT LEAST DAILY DURING PROLONGED RAINFALL ANY REQUIRED REPAIRS SHALL BE MADE IMMEDIATELY.

AT NO TIME SHALL MORE THAN ONE FOOT OF SEDIMENT BE ALLOWED TO ACCUMULATE BEHIND A SEDIMENT FENCE. SEDIMENT SHALL BE REMOVED OR REGRADED INTO SLOPE.



955 SLEMETTAL 6/25/99 DESCRIPTION M. NO. DESCRIPTION DATE APPROVE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT NEW RAND VISITOR COMPLEX EROSION CONTROL PLAN DESIGNED MONITY EDGESO REVIEWED GREEGE WESTON MPROVED DRAWN BLR SCALD AS SHOWN DATE LINE 25, 1999 SEET 16 OF 62 DRAWING NO.

ALWAYSTHINK SAFETY

EROSION CONTROL PLAN **PPENDIX** U